

## **Senator Maria Cantwell**

### **Getting Results for Washington State**

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#### **Cutting Your Taxes**

For nearly two decades, Washington state taxpayers have been unable to deduct the state and local taxes they pay from their annual federal income tax returns. Senator Cantwell worked with a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives to restore this important tax cut for the next two years as part of the American Jobs Creation Act, signed into law in October 2004. Under the Cantwell provisions, more than one million Washingtonians will receive an average tax cut of over \$500, and state officials estimate that residents will save a total of almost \$500 million per year. Now, Senator Cantwell is leading the effort to make this tax cut permanent.

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#### **Fighting Identity Theft**

Cantwell's legislation to fight identity theft, "The Fair and Accurate Transactions Act," was signed into law in 2003. The law's provisions are the culmination of years of hard work by Senator Cantwell to provide law enforcement officials and identity theft victims with the tools they need to battle the nation's fastest-growing crime. Cantwell's bill helps ensure that identity theft victims are able to protect their credit rating from further damage by requiring credit reporting agencies to block information on fraudulent transactions resulting from identity theft. It also created a standardized process for a person to establish that they are a victim of identity theft, and allows law enforcement to act as the victim's agent in obtaining business records. Finally, the new law requires that once a business verifies that an individual is a victim of identity theft, the business has 30 days to provide all relevant application and transaction records to the victim.

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#### **Supporting Our National Guard and Reserve**

Historically, National Guard and Reserve deployment periods, for the purpose of determining mobilization lengths, have been calculated to begin at the point of activation. However, in September 2003, the Pentagon changed practice mid-stream by determining the deployment lengths of over 20,000 personnel in Iraq as beginning at the date of entry into the theater of operations. In fact, many service members first learned of the change from the press, not military leaders. Cantwell succeeded in blocking the change, working to pass a requirement that the Pentagon tell activated Guardsmen and Reservists the expected length of their deployments, calculated from the time they are activated. The Cantwell provision will help prevent sudden, mid-stream policy changes, giving members of the Guard and Reserves the kind of transparency and predictability they deserve.

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#### **Encouraging Innovation in Aerospace**

Cantwell passed legislation as part of the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill creating a Center of Excellence for applied research and training in the use of advanced materials in commercial airplanes. Established at the University of Washington in 2003, the Center of Excellence is made up of business, academic, and government interests. It will coordinate research efforts and encourage the broader use of advanced structural materials, including composites and aluminum alloys, in future aircraft such as the Boeing 787. The Center capitalizes on Washington's technological know-how to expand the region's research and development capabilities, helping to ensure that Washington state remains a global leader in aerospace innovation.

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#### **Protecting Our Borders: Closing the Visa Waiver Loophole**

In 1999, Ahmed Ressam tried to enter the United States at Port Angeles with a carload of explosives after first going through France and Canada. In response, Cantwell authored legislation to push foreign countries to use biometric standards, such as the inclusion of fingerprints and facial recognition on visas, to stop terrorists before they get to the U.S. Her proposal was signed into law as part of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism

Prevention Act of 2004. Cantwell's provision requires the Secretary of State to report to Congress on the progress Visa Waiver Program countries are making towards implementing a biometric visa system to identify potential terrorists. This will allow Congress to better evaluate the continued vulnerability of the Visa Waiver Program as a loophole that terrorists can exploit to get around our nation's biometric visa identification systems.

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### **Protecting Our Borders: Doubling Border Agents**

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After September 11, Cantwell fought to beef up security on our northern border, and called attention to the allocation of a disproportionately large share of resources to our border with Mexico. She created a coalition of Northern Border Senators and wrote a series of letters to the President and members of Congress highlighting this discrepancy and the risk of terrorism it presented. Working with the Northern Border Coalition, Maria successfully secured funding to double the number of INS inspectors and Border Patrol and Customs agents stationed on the northern border. Maria also worked with the INS Commissioner to get the NEXUS secure frequent commuter system up and running. The program, a joint operation between the U.S. and Canadian governments, is designed to simplify border crossings for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. The program debuted in 2002, making Washington the first state with an operational frequent commuter program.

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### **Expanding Mt. Rainier National Park**

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Senator Cantwell worked with former Representative Jennifer Dunn (R-WA) to pass legislation to expand the boundaries of Mt. Rainier National Park by roughly 800 acres—the largest expansion of the park in 70 years. The law, which was signed in October 2004, will improve access to the park, allow for a new camping area to be built, and preserve one of the last inland old-growth rainforests in the country. Maintaining accessibility to the park is important, not only for visitors, but also for Washington's economy. Visitors to Rainier spend nearly \$25 million annually, supporting 800 jobs and \$13 million in personal incomes in communities surrounding the Park.

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### **Saving Ratepayers from Enron's Greed**

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In May 2005, during Senate Energy Committee hearings, Senator Cantwell added two important amendments to the new energy bill, and worked to ensure their inclusion in the final version of the bill that became law in August 2005. Her first amendment gave the federal government the power to ban dishonest energy traders and corrupt corporate officials from working in the energy industry, preventing them from continuing to drive up costs through illegal trading practices. Cantwell's second amendment will prevent Enron from further raiding the wallets of Washington state consumers. Specifically, the provision can be used to prevent Enron from suing Snohomish County ratepayers for \$122 million for electricity it never delivered. The energy bill also contains important safeguards to protect the Northwest's historic system of cost-based public power—despite the Bush Administration's proposal in early 2005 to raise regional power rates by an estimated \$1.7 billion, or more than \$400 for families in some of Washington's most rural communities. The plan would have changed the way the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) sets its rates. Currently, about 70 percent of the electricity used in Washington is BPA power. To protect Northwest consumers, Senator Cantwell worked with her colleagues in Congress to get the proposal dropped, and will continue fighting to keep this unfair proposal from resurfacing.

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### **Restoring Privacy to Library and Bookstore Records**

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Our nation's founding principles demand respect for personal privacy. That's why Senator Cantwell is working to fix provisions in the PATRIOT Act that compromise the privacy of bookstore proprietors, librarians, and their customers. The SAFE Act, which Cantwell has cosponsored, would protect our nation's borders as well as our right to privacy by rolling back PATRIOT Act provisions that allow the federal government to acquire private records as part of secret, open-ended investigations into the activities of law-abiding Americans. Instead, government investigators would have to show a specific connection between the records they seek and a suspected terrorist or spy. In April 2005, Maria called on the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold hearings on the bill, and will continue to push for a national security policy that doesn't compromise our civil liberties.

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## **Strengthening Rural Health Care**

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Senator Cantwell introduced the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Act, which was signed into law in 2004. The NHSC is a federal program that places doctors in rural and underserved communities by offering grant and loan repayment assistance. By making the program's payments to medical professionals tax-free, Cantwell's legislation expanded the NHSC's capacity by nearly 70 percent, allowing the program to bring more doctors to rural and underserved communities. Previously, the NHSC was forced to pay the taxes for those grants and loan repayments, which consumed 40 percent of the program's budget.

## **Improving Safety for Wildland Firefighters**

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In 2001, four forest firefighters lost their lives fighting the Thirtymile Fire north of Winthrop. An investigation revealed that, tragically, mistakes by the Forest Service may have contributed to their deaths. In a number of Senate hearings, Senator Cantwell focused on what went wrong, and worked to help create a cultural shift within the Forest Service to increase accountability and improve training. Senator Cantwell also worked with Representative Doc Hastings (R-WA) to pass legislation injecting independence into investigations of future forest firefighter fatalities. The new law requires the USDA's Inspector General, not just the Forest Service, to investigate the deaths.

## **Addressing the Connection between Identity Theft and Meth Abuse**

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The growing connection between identity theft, the nation's fastest-growing crime, and the use and production of methamphetamines, is an issue raised often during Cantwell's meetings with law enforcement officials from across Washington state. For example, according to the Spokane County Sheriff, 100 percent of the county's large-scale identity theft cases in 2004 included meth connections. In response, Maria introduced legislation to begin a national study of this troubling trend. Her bill, "The Methamphetamine and Identity Theft Study Act," would also create a national database allowing federal, state, and local law enforcement to share information on crimes involving meth and identity theft, giving them an additional resource in the fight against both crimes.

## **Opening Foreign Markets to Washington Goods**

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Senator Cantwell worked to create new trade opportunities for Washington farmers and producers by opening foreign markets to their goods. In 2002 and 2003, she visited Cuba and met with a wide range of government officials. The meetings resulted in the first Washington state exports of apples, peas, and lentils to Cuba in over 50 years. Cantwell also visited Mexico to advocate that the Mexican government remove its existing trade barriers on potato imports, which had prevented Washington farmers from accessing the potentially lucrative Mexican market. Five months after her visit, Mexican to a rule change allowing for the first-ever import of Washington state potato exports. Similarly, in October 2002, Cantwell negotiated with the British Columbia government to permit the sale of wine from eight new Washington state wineries. The agreement expanded Washington winery access to B.C. by 40 percent, substantially increasing Washington's share of the \$60 million in wine British Columbia imports from the United States each year.

## **Advocating for Innovative, Home-Grown Solutions to our Energy Needs**

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Recent hikes in gas and energy rates show the volatility of relying heavily on foreign fuel. Increased use of biofuels would help ease the burden on consumers while creating jobs locally. To support home-grown energy sources, Cantwell added language to the energy bill recently signed into law that boosts domestic research, development, and demonstration of advanced biofuels production technologies. To make biofuels cost-effective, we must make certain advances that allow for the production of fuel from a more diverse range of sources. Today, most biofuels are made from corn and soy—crops primarily grown in the Midwest. A recent WSU study estimated that Washington has enough wheat straw to produce about 200 million gallons of ethanol—and 1.2 billion gallons with technology improvements. By working to accelerate the development of

clean, plant-based fuels, Senator Cantwell is helping to initiate an important step toward emissions reduction, while at the same time decreasing our dependence on foreign oil.

### **Standing Up to Price Gouging**

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When disasters strike, we need to make sure we have a plan to protect American consumers. With drivers in Washington state paying 97 cents a gallon more than last year, we need to put oil companies on notice that profiteering at the gas pump will not be tolerated—especially during national emergencies. To prevent price gouging at the pump, Cantwell introduced legislation in September 2005 to ban manipulation in the oil and gasoline markets and implement new investigation and enforcement mechanisms. Her bill will promote transparency by requiring full disclosure of wholesale gas pricing policies, and enact stronger enforcement authority for the Federal Trade Commission, Department of Energy, and Department of Justice. It will also allow the President to declare national energy emergencies, and trigger a federal ban on price gouging. With oil companies racking up record profits and other industries like agriculture and airlines taking a devastating hit, we need to demand some accountability. We learned our lesson with Enron, and there's no reason the oil industry should not be subject to some of the same rules as other types of energy companies.

### **Promoting Fair Competition for America's Aerospace Workers**

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Currently, Cantwell is working with a bipartisan group of senators to call on European governments to reject unfair subsidies for Airbus, and worked to pass a resolution supporting the president's authority to take action to protect American aerospace jobs. Airbus has benefited from a unique subsidy known as "launch aid," which is risk-free, low-cost government funding for the development of new lines of aircraft. The company only needs to repay the loans if the new product succeeds. This means Airbus remains unfettered by marketplace realities, while American companies must assume realistic levels of commercial risk. For this reason, Senator Cantwell also wrote to Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick asking him to redouble his efforts to get a commitment from the European Union to stop its support of launch aid.